

WASHINGTON  
DAILY NEWS

MAY 13 1964

STAT

## Quiet Mahon Has Come

By MARSHALL McNEIL  
Scripps-Howard Staff Writer

Rep. George Herman Mahon (D., Tex.) today at age 63 is one of the most powerful men in the Federal Government because of the unwritten seniority rule of the House of Representatives.

In 1939, he became a member of the House Appropriations Committee. In the intervening quarter century, the 24 men who then ranked ahead of him on the committee have died, retired or been defeated. Rep. Mahon has lived and regularly been re-elected.

So, upon the death yesterday of 85-year-old Rep. Cannon, the seniority rule finally shoved Rep. Mahon to the pinnacle of power in his committee—the chairmanship.

As chairman, Rep. Mahon will have the primary responsibility for and authority over every cent of spending by every Federal Department, bureau and agency.

### ¶ Better Product

Associates agree that Rep. Mahon is one of the better products of the seniority rule which, blind to merit, advances men to places of committee power as long as they stay in office and their party controls Congress.

In 15 years as chairman of the Defense Appropriations Subcommittee, under Rep. Cannon's general chairmanship, he has handled the biggest single spending budget in the government.

In so doing, he has become privy to all the Pentagon's military secrets. Serious and industrious, he has become more knowledgeable than most about the far-flung, complicated Defense Department. He knows where the bodies are; who has the essential power; who the decision-makers are and how and thru whom they operate.



REP. MAHON

Generally, Rep. Mahon has been on the side of the men in uniform. Yet he occasionally has criticized the high brass, from the Joint Chiefs of Staff on down.

### ¶ Served With LBJ

Presently, he is an enthusiastic admirer of Defense Secretary Robert McNamara.

And George Mahon and Lyndon B. Johnson served together in the House for more than 10 years.

Rep. Mahon is a conservative West Texan, transplanted there as a boy from Louisiana where his father was a farmer. George is a farmer himself. He likes to pick a hundred pounds of cotton or so each season.

Mild-mannered and generally non-controversial, he gets along well with nearly everyone.

Politically skittish—like a West Texas rabbit, he jumps when the bushes move—he often has worried about re-election in his 20-county district in the Lower Texas Panhandle. But he never really has had a hard battle to retain his seat.

### ¶ Quiet

Rep. Mahon is a quiet and popular member of the exclusive Burning Tree Club where Washington's greats play. He plays on Saturday, and on Sunday but not until after church. (He's a Methodist.) He shoots 80-to-85, and sings when the shots are going well. He never displays his skill on the links of his home town Lubbock. He wants constituents to know when they call him he won't have to be run down on some golf course. Rep. Mahon also is regarded as a fine bridge player.

He does not drink; he is careful of his diet. Six-feet-three, he weighs about 180 pounds; his dark hair and boyish face make him look some 20 years younger than he is.

The frugality of his living stems from his Scottish background.

His father—who died at 94—went to West Texas as a tenant farmer. Within two years the family—father, mother and eight children—got enough together to make a down payment on their own farm. After a rural school and the local Loraine High School, George attended the University of Texas and the University of Minnesota. He married his childhood sweetheart, Helen Stevenson of Loraine, in 1923, and they have one daughter. In 1926, he was elected county attorney, then district attorney. He came to Congress in 1935.

### ¶ Offered

At the time, the late Rep. James P. Buchanan (D., Tex.) was chairman of the Appropriations Committee. Rep. Buchanan offered a committee vacancy to Rep. Albert Thomas (D., Tex.). Because Rep. Thomas declined, Rep. Mahon got the job and is Rep. Buchanan's successor today. Rep. Thomas now ranks third on the committee.

Generally, a supporter of Administration foreign and military policy, Rep. Mahon has gone his own conservative way on domestic affairs.

Last Feb. 10 he was one of 130 House members who voted against the pending civil rights bill.